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Chaisson, Irene (Muskie) and Paradis, Lucy (Muskie) oral history interview

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Interview with Irene (Muskie) Chaisson and Lucy (Muskie) Paradis by Jim Ross

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Chaisson, Irene (Muskie)

Paradis, Lucy (Muskie)

Interviewer

Ross, Jim

Date

May 14, 1985

Place

Unknown

ID Number

MOH 003

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Biographic Note

Edmund S. Muskie's sisters, Irene and Lucy were born in Rumford, Maine on January 26, 1912 and April 5, 1916 respectively. Their father, Stephen Muskie, was a tailor who emigrated from Poland. Their mother was a homemaker originally from Buffalo, New York. Both sisters went to St. Stephen's High School and attended a Catholic church.

Irene married a Chaisson at the age of twenty-three. She worked in a mill as a lab technician for eleven years. At the time of the interview, she resided in Rumford. Lucy married a Paradis at the age of twenty-eight. She went to hairdressing school and worked in a salon in Rumford. At the time of the interview, she lived in West Brewer, Maine.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: their life throughout high school; family recollections and traditions; social relations in Maine; Rumford; and the Great Depression.

Indexed Names

Barker, Gladys
Breault, Elizabeth "Betty" (Muskie)
Chaisson, Irene (Muskie)
Chouinard, Frances (Muskie)
Gagnon, Albert
Gagnon, Dot
Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996
Muskie, Eugene
Muskie, Josephine
Muskie, Stephen
Paradis, Lucy (Muskie)

Transcript

Jim Ross: Now beginning with, Mrs. Chaisson, what is your full name and address?

Irene Chaisson: Irene J. Chaisson, 20 Congress Street, Rumford, Maine.

JR: And you, Mrs. Paradis?

Lucy Paradis: And mine, RFD 1, West Brewer.

IC: Your name.

LP: Lucy Paradis.

JR: Where were you born and where? When were you born and where?

IC: I was born January 26th, 1912.

JR: Where were you born?

IC: On Knox Street, I'm not exactly sure, it was on Knox Street, Rumford.

JR: Okay.

LP: I was born April 5th, 1916, in Rumford.

JR: How many years did your family live in the house in which you were born, do you remember that?

IC: Oh, I don't remember that. I was never told.

JR: All right. Do you remember?

LP: How many years?

JR: How many years -

IC: You lived in the house where you were born.

LP: Well-

IC: You were born down on Spruce Street. And Ed was born on Knox Street, you were born on Spruce Street. You were there for, gosh I don't know how many years.

LP: Oh, let's see, we moved up to Virginia and I think I was in the fifth grade when we moved, that's Virginia they call that part of Rumford, Virginia.

JR: All right. So you did move once.

LP: We moved twice after that.

JR: Oh, really?

LP: Yeah, we moved, we had to move and we couldn't find a rent right away, you know, a rent where we wanted to stay permanently, so we moved into this other rent and we were there just a matter of a few months, and then my father's sister moved to Boston and he bought her house, and that's where we lived after that.

JR: Okay, All right, what order were you all born, what was the sequence of births?

IC: I was the oldest, Ed was next, and she was next, Lucy was next. And, Eugene came after her, and then Frances, and then Betty.

JR: Do you remember the time, the difference in years between you and -?

IC: There was two years between Ed and I, two years between Ed and Lucy, there was two and a half years between you and Eugene, and then there was two years between he and Franny, Frances, and two years between Frances and Betty.

JR: Do you know how old your father was when you were born, do you have any idea?

IC: No. No, I don't.

JR: Any chance- (*unintelligible phrase*)

LP: I'm trying to think how much. Never knew exactly what his age was anyway.

JR: Really?

LP: He had, when he died we had an age form, but I don't know if that (*unintelligible phrase*).

JR: Was he rather secretive about that?

LP: I think his birthday was in September.

IC: Yeah, on the twentieth or twenty-first.

JR: Did you, would you ever celebrate his birthday, or would you like know he had a specific date for a birthday, or was it kind of. . . . ?

LP: I can't remember if we celebrated his birthday or not.

IC: I don't think we did when we were chil-, you know, real young. When we got up into high school. I guess we did, but when we were real young I don't think we ever did.

JR: So you're not really sure how old, I mean the age when your father died is wavery. How old was he, did you think he was?

IC: When he died?

JR: Yes.

IC: He was seventy-two, wasn't he, seventy-three?

LP: I don't know. You haven't got his (*unintelligible phrase*)?

IC: It probably would be in one of those books.

JR: All right, how old was your mother when she died?

IC: She was eighty-three, wasn't it?

LP: Eighty-three, yeah.

JR: What occupation did, was your main, was your father's main occupation?

IC: He was a tailor.

JR: A tailor? Did he do anything before that or after that, any specific, what was his training, or did he have any, or did he just pick up the, you know, when he came to America?

IC: No, he went from Poland to England and he, I don't remember what they call that, when

they learn how to do a specific trade, they had some name for that. But that's where he got, that's where he learned his trade, was in England.

JR: A vocational kind of training.

IC: Yeah, and then he came over here.

JR: And he just started practicing right away?

IC: He went to, did he go to Pennsylvania first?

LP: I think so, and then he went to -

IC: Then he went to Buffalo, New York.

JR: And then he came here?

IC: And he met my mother and they got married, and they came here on their honeymoon.

JR: Oh, so they met in Pennsylvania or-

IC: No, in Buffalo.

JR: Oh, Buffalo.

JR: Where in Buffalo was it again? Do you remember?

IC: Oh, I don't know, I don't know that.

JR: What was the name of the store, do you know what the name of the store was, or. . . ?

IC: What was the name of the street where Granny lived? (*Unintelligible phrase*).

LP: Goodyear Avenue.

IC: Goodyear Avenue, that's where she lived, where my mother lived in Buffalo.

JR: Oh, okay

LP: Then he brought her here on her honeymoon and said they'd go back; they never went. Then went to visit a couple of times, I think, but -

JR: Why did they take a liking so much to Rumford?

LP: Oh, she didn't.

IC: She didn't.

LP: She wanted to go back because all, you know, she was kind of a shy person.

IC: She couldn't talk English.

LP: And, she wanted to go back with her family, and he didn't. It didn't make any difference to him because, you know, he hadn't lived there in Buffalo, so he, so they went back a couple of times I think, that's all.

IC: Yeah, I think so.

JR: What was the name of his store, do you remember what the name of his store?

IC: His place of business?

JR: Yeah, or his, yeah, his place of business.

IC: It was just under his name, "Stephen Muskie, Tailor."

JR: And he changed his name to Muskie when? Was it long -?

LP: It was when Ed was in college, wasn't it?

IC: No, no, he changed it when he came over, but he changed it legally after Ed went to college.

JR: Why did he, why did he change it? It was just-

IC: Because it was such a long name, people couldn't pronounce it and they couldn't write it, so that's why he changed it.

LP: Then he had to have everything changed, insurances and all that had to change.

JR: What, did your mother ever have an occupation? Did she ever do any sort of job at all?

IC: No.

LP: She had six of us.

JR: Yes, that's a job.

LP: And she did all the cooking and sewing and, you know, she had to do that herself. He wouldn't, well he couldn't afford to buy clothes that were made so she learned how to sew, and -

JR: Really? Can you describe the house that you lived in, like how the rooms were set up? Do

you remember what it looked like?

IC: Do you mean the last house we lived in?

JR: Yeah, yeah.

IC: The last house we moved into?

JR: Yeah, that you both remember, the one on 8 Hemingway Street, maybe, how about that one?

IC: Well, you went into front doors, you went into a hallway, and to the left was a living room, and then from there you went into a dining room. And then through the, you went through the hallway into the kitchen, and off from the kitchen there was a pantry, and there was also a shed. Then there was the stairs that went upstairs from the hallway, and there was three bedrooms up there. Four of us girls slept in one bedroom, and the two boys slept in another bedroom, and then Mother and Father in another one. And then there was an attic, it was three stories.

JR: So now who did the cooking and cleaning and shopping, was it your mother? She did most of that?

IC: Well, she depended on us, I know she depended on me a lot to run to the store. My father did the weekly shopping for the week, and I know he did that for some of the time but I don't know if he always did it. And I know he used to like to go and buy meat, and we used to have to run to the store for her because she had so much to do at home. And, up until we got, you know, until we got quite old, and then she started going, doing her own grocery shopping.

JR: So you never had anybody else coming in and doing cleaning or anything like that?

IC: No, no.

LP: Well, we had to take care of our own room. Make the beds.

JR: Did your father ever, let's say your mother was out at some time, would your father ever cook or do the dishes or, you know, clean the clothes or anything like that?

IC: He made the boys' clothes, I think. He made some of the clothes, I know he did. I'm not sure just how much of the clothes he made, but he did make some of the clothes, the outer clothes, the coats and suits and things. And I know on Sundays once in a while he used to make some special little dish he'd hear about during the week, sometime on Sunday night he'd make it for supper. But that's as far as it went. He never did dishes or, that I can remember, no. There was enough of us to do the dishes.

JR: Yeah, I guess so. Did your family, you said earlier your family bought second-hand clothes, or did you make them mostly?

IC: No, my mother made the clothes.

JR: Made them? So you didn't very often go out and buy, go to the local store and -?

IC: Never did.

JR: Never did?

IC: Never did.

LP: I can remember when I was in high school she had, she bought me a skirt but she, at that time people used, well they do now, but you could go in and put a dollar, two dollars on it, but she never would let me wear it until it was paid for.

JR: Really?

LP: (*Unintelligible phrase*), remember that?

IC: Yeah.

JR: What about like a prom or something like that, you know, would they splurge or would they just, you know?

LP: We never went.

IC: We never went.

JR: Really?

IC: I don't know if they had any at that time. This is a long time ago.

JR: That's true, that's true. All right, special occasions, let's say Christmas or Easter?

LP: Well she, you know, well our First Communion dresses she made.

IC: I don't think she made mine, I think Aunt Dorsey made mine.

LP: I've got a picture of mine.

IC: I still have mine. I don't have it, Judy's got it.

LP: Oh, yeah.

JR: Who is Judy?

IC: My youngest daughter.

JR: Oh, all right. Now, you said also earlier that you were, you kind of helped out in the house. Did you have specific duties, I mean did you, you know, like Monday, Wednesday, Friday I got to do the dishes, and Tuesday, and Thursday, Ed will do the dishes, or did you have anything set up?

LP: She lived by the day, you know, like Monday she washed, Tuesday she ironed, Wednesday was a day off, right? Thursday she washed again, Friday she cleaned, Saturday she cooked, remember that? Every day, so when I, after my father died we moved in with her because she didn't want to live alone and I couldn't get used to that, because if my husband would come home and say, you want to go out somewhere, if the washing machine was in the middle of the floor, I'd go, you know, but she didn't like that, she had to work every day, you know, that day of the week she did certain things. But she had Wednesday off, she'd go shopping or -

IC: Well, she had sewing to do.

LP: Or sewing or something.

IC: Mending, yeah.

JR: You said you all slept in, the sisters slept together, I take it, and the brothers slept together, right? What was that like? I mean, what was it like, you know, when you had lights out, all right when you were in elementary school or you were in high school, I mean did you sit up and talk and giggle and all like you always do, or did you, what was it like? I mean, did it bring you closer, would you say?

LP: Oh, I don't know if it did or not. But that was all we knew was, I mean now they won't let you adopt a child unless you've got, or children unless you have three or four bedrooms. There you could put four in one room and nobody would say anything, you know. But we were just, that's how they did. I think everybody did at that time, not every person in the house had their, you know.

IC: She and I were close, and I used to read to her every night after we went to bed. Did that for a long, long, long time.

LP: Not that I couldn't read, but it was (*unintelligible phrase*).

JR: All right, where did you specifically eat your meals, was it in the kitchen or dining room?

IC: In the kitchen.

JR: In the kitchen?

IC: Yeah.

JR: Did you ever like move into the dining room, or. . . ?

IC: Oh, yes, on holidays and Sundays.

LP: Before they bought that kitchen set, didn't we eat in the dining room for a long time until he bought that kitchen set and then we ate out in the kitchen after that.

IC: That's right.

LP: They were supposed to have that table and chairs down there at the Bates (*unintelligible phrase*).

JR: We also have your washer and dryer I believe, something like that. Someone's washer and dryer, I don't really know.

LP: Oh, she took everything.

IC: Yes.

LP: She even took a light that was in the dining room.

JR: Really.

LP: She knew what she was doing, she's been doing it, she didn't want any help. She got up there and she unscrewed that light up there and packed it all. I don't know if they're going to use half of that, but -

JR: This is the lady that helped bring all the stuff to Bates, I take it?

IC: Well, I didn't see her.

JR: Do you remember her name?

LP: I think I've got her card. Or it might have, I don't know if it was Janice, or, I thought it was Arden, but probably not.

JR: I'd like to get that name if I could, you know, get back In touch with -

LP: She even took plants, from the gardens, dug up plants and things, I don't know where she was going to put those.

JR: Oh boy, that's interesting. What did you, at meals, what would you usually eat or drink, what was the usual, okay, let's say for breakfast, let's start with breakfast, what would you usually eat?

IC: Well, my father usually made cereal, because he was the first one up. And we usually had

cereal except on, during the week, except on Sundays. Then we'd have, well sometimes we'd have, we had special grape nuts on Sundays, or we had egg and bacon.

JR: So Sundays was a special day, I mean you had a certain meal.

LP: And we had a big meal at noon on Sundays, that was (*unintelligible word*). And I never, I had a hard time getting out of the habit of having that big meal on Sunday, and then the kids, my kids told me, oh, probably a year or so ago, yeah, we used to want to go skating right after, you know, in the afternoon, but we had to stay home until we ate that meal, and it was a big meal. They (*unintelligible phrase*) about that, but we always had a big meal on Sunday at noon. And then, during the week we must have had it at night. Yeah, because we were all in school, we had to walk to -

IC: Well, when we were in elementary school we had it at noontime, because Papa always came home to, came home at noontime.

LP: He worked, he'd always walk, he walked until they got the busses, to town here, so I don't know if that was about a mile?

JR: What time usually would he come home?

LP: Twelve o'clock, and at night it was five o'clock.

JR: So he'd come -

LP: We had our meal at the same time every day.

IC: Always on the same hour.

JR: He would be home for twelve to one, right, and then five to - When would he get up in the morning, what time would he rise?

LP: I don't know whether he got up, probably around five-thirty, six o'clock.

JR: Wow. And when would you all get up?

IC: We had to get up at seven o'clock, no matter when, during the summer or anytime, we had to get out of bed. Laying in bed was for lazy people and we had to get out of bed. We had our little jobs to do, and we had to be up to do them.

JR: That's great. All right. You all had a garden, right? Now, did you, was that used a lot, was it a huge thing, was it, what did you grow in it, or what was it like, what was your garden like?

IC: No, we didn't have a very big garden.

LP: We had tomatoes, carrots.

IC: Cucumbers, string beans, carrots, beets, turnips, that's about it.

LP: And Ed, I don't know how many years he did it, he grew something for the 4-H Club, wasn't it?

IC: Yeah, I believe it was.

LP: Was it 4-H?

JR: And he would give, he would give it to the 4-H Club, or how would he do?

LP: I don't know how they had -

IC: No, they don't give it to the 4-H Club, they'd have a display and they display something, you know, because you had enough to display.

JR: Do you remember what it was he grew?

IC: No. I don't.

JR: Oh, all right. Did you have livestock or anything like that? A cow or anything like that? No.

IC: No.

LP: We didn't have enough room. If you could see where the house was -

JR: Is the house still there?

IC: Yes.

JR: I'll visit it. Did your father hunt? For rabbit or for meat, or maybe, or deer?

IC: He hunted but he never had any luck. I don't think he wanted to shoot anything, I think he went just for the sport of it, you know, to be out in the woods, be outside. Because he felt he needed this, to get away from the shop. And he never did shoot anything.

JR: Really?

IC: No.

LP: He used to go fishing. Not that often, but he went with, there was, seems though it was every year Mr. Gagnon and -

IC: Yeah, they went up to Four Ponds (?), and they used to take Ed.

JR: Yeah, I guess that's where he got his interest in hunting. So you, mainly you got your meat or fish from the store, you didn't usually go out and hunt it?

IC: No.

JR: Before a meal, when you all sat down, did you all say grace? Did you have a, like a, "All right, dinner's on, sit down." Was there grace at all, or a prayer?

LP: I can't remember that there ever was. It seems so in a way, but I am not sure. You know, this was a long time ago.

JR: It was, I can understand that. When you all had a meal, were you all called to it or was there a bell, you know, or was it -?

IC: All it was, we knew we had to be home.

JR: And you, it was just an appointed hour.

LP: Yeah, and we had to be there, there was no, that was mealtime.

JR: Were you allowed to talk, I mean during, what was a meal like, I mean did you sit there and -?

IC: Well, we would talk but, once in a while if we got silly and got to laughing, my father would get mad at us and tell us to eat our meal and never mind fooling around. And the more he'd get, the madder he'd get, the worse we would be.

LP: But he used to eat slow, he'd chew, it seems as though he would even chew his milk after a while. And he'd chew, and then we'd get to laughing.

IC: We had to stay right there until -

LP: And wait until he got done.

IC: They got through eating.

JR: So you couldn't leave the table, it was, you waited for him to finish.

LP: Yeah.

JR: What if he finished first, would he get up and leave, or. . . ?

LP: I don't know if he ever finished first.

JR: Was there any food that you all were served that you hated? I mean, you know, when I was a little kid, and I still do, I just, lima beans just never went with me, I would sit there and, did you ever had that and you just wouldn't eat it?

IC: We didn't like anything with onions.

JR: Oh really?

IC: So my poor mother had to cook stuff without too much onions in it because we'd pick it, pick it out from our food, you know, if we found any. But I can't remember any -

JR: Like liver, or. . . ?

IC: Any special food.

LP: Oh, liver, I don't know. That's not too bad, I can eat calves liver, but, you know, nobody else likes it but me.

IC: My mother was pretty good about cooking meals that she knew that we liked, you know, most of us liked. If we didn't, then she'd cook something special for the one who didn't like what she cooked. Especially at suppertime, sometimes she'd fix two or three different things.

JR: Golly, that's great, I wish my mother would do that.

LP: I did the same with mine. I guess I inherited it from her.

JR: That's great. What was your mother like? I mean, was she easy to get along with, was she, you know, as a person, as you were growing up did you go to her and say, "Ma, oh, this guy's, I like this guy so much." I mean, could you do that? I mean, what was she like, as a person?

IC: I could talk with my father better than I could with my mother. But my mother was easy, easy to get along with. She had her temperaments, but she was, what do you remember?

LP: I don't remember right now.

IC: I know she used to play cards with us a lot, after supper. And play different games with us. She always had a lot of time for us. Not during the day, but after supper at night.

JR: What kind of games would you play, do you remember at all?

IC: Well, I can remember one, Casino, we played. You don't hear of that game any more. She used to play that with us. And that's the only one I can remember.

JR: So she was basically very affectionate when she had the time.

IC: Yeah, yeah, she was.

JR: I mean, if she had the time to give. So, did you end up, when you were in high school, when you were a junior and senior in high school, did you find you could talk to her about your boy, your male problems?

IC: I never had any male problems.

JR: I don't believe it.

IC: I didn't. Not until after I got out of school and went to work.

LP: Well that was one thing they were strict about, was going out at night. I mean, remember? Well, she got away with more than we did.

JR: How did you manage that?

IC: I never went out at night any more than you did.

LP: And you know, and one time she wanted to go to camp, summer camp for a week or two weeks?

IC: Two weeks.

LP: And she was the only one that ever went. And then taking piano lessons, she was the only one. I used to sit there and pound on the piano, but nobody ever said, do you want to take lessons. And, she took piano lessons, and they cost them, at that time it was two dollars a day? Now, that was a lot of money in that, two dollars per lesson, that was, see, how many years ago it was. And, and then one year she wanted a sweater and my father, he never bought anything for Christmas, my mother always did the shopping. But that one year he was giving her that sweater, so he had to give the rest of us something.

JR: Really?

LP: You don't remember that? And he gave me a clock, because I was always taking his clock at night, and when he'd wake up he wouldn't know what time it was. So he bought me one of those travel clocks. I remember that, that one year he bought us all something because you had to have something.

IC: I don't remember that.

LP: She says, "Well I'll ask him and if he says no, it's all right."

IC: Yeah, that's the thing about me, you know, if I wanted anything, if I wanted a little bit of money or whatever I wanted, I'd go and ask him. He was always good at giving a big sermon, you know, before he'd give it to you. Tell you how much, you know -

JR: What would he say?

IC: How much, how hard it was to earn money and how much money it, just count the pennies for a year and see how many pennies you have. And, things like this, you know. That didn't bother me any, you know, as long as I got what I wanted after he got through with the sermon. But they didn't want to hear the sermon, so they ended up not having anything.

JR: You didn't want to hear the sermon, you didn't like that?

LP: No, I guess not.

JR: That's great. What expectations did your parents have? Did they - you know, say, minister, or you know, housewife, I want you to get married. I mean, what expectations did they have? Or did they?

IC: I don't think they had any.

LP: No, they didn't have any.

JR: But did they want you to go to school, I mean was there like a drive to make, you know, "You're going to go to school, you know, I want you to learn for, for anything, or just I want you to be." Did they have any like goals for you, or just -?

LP: No, I don't think so. There wasn't that money to do it. No, I went to hairdressing school.

JR: When did you go to hair dressing school?

LP: What year? It was after I graduated from high school, I worked at Kennebunk beach, where Ed worked. And the following year I went to Boston with a couple of girls I had worked with and, to get a waitress job or, well I was too young, I guess, at the time, I wasn't. And, so then my father wrote and told me about look into the schools, hairdresser. Me a green one from the country, you know, and having to go and look for a school. At that time, I think it was about a hundred dollars for the, it wasn't much more than that. And then I lived with my aunt while I was there. And then after a year or so I came back home and worked here at the hairdresser's.

JR: What did your parents consider important? I mean, did they, like around the house or in ways they, you know, dealt with other people or yourselves, did they consider anything important like money, or fame, you know, or love? Did they consider anything very, you know, something more important than another?

IC: Well, money was important because we had so little of it. I know that. And -

LP: If he had charged the people what he should have charged them for the work he did, we probably would have had more. But, he did a, he did a lot of this invisible mending, mend something you couldn't see it. Well, if you had it done in the cities it would cost you something.

But, he didn't dare to charge them, it was too much money to charge. He thought more of the customer than he did his own family in that respect, you know.

JR: Did you ever bring that up and say, "Hey, Dad, what about us?" Did you ever bring that up?

IC: No, we never thought of it at the time, I guess. I guess we never thought of it at the time.

JR: About how much would he bring home a week?

IC: I have no idea.

LP: You know, there were three of us, Ed, you and me, the others didn't work in the shop, we worked with him at the shop. We'd mend the, not mend, shorten pants or lengthen pants or, what else would we do for, Ed used to, patches and the linings, and I never had to do that.

JR: When would you do this?

IC: Oh, when we graduated from high school, during the summer.

JR: So did he pay you, or was that just considered helping dad and helping the family?

IC: I can't remember getting paid.

LP: I don't know if we got paid or not.

IC: I can't remember if I got paid I can't remember. I must have got paid after I got out of school, but I can't remember how much I got paid.

JR: Did, as you all began to graduate from the high school, did you live at home or did you move out into an apartment in Rumford?

IC: No, we lived at home.

JR: You lived at home?

LP: Yeah, there was none of that moving out at that time. I don't think, no I don't think anybody did.

JR: So what was the, how old were you when you left? I mean when did you say -?

IC: Well, I was twenty-three when I got married, and that's when I left. You left when you got married?

JR: When were you married?

LP: When? See, now I forget my dates.

IC: How old were you?

JR: How old were you?

LP: How old was I when I was, twenty-eight.

JR: So you lived at home until you were twenty-eight. You worked different jobs, or worked for your father during that, before that time?

LP: Before that, yeah. Well, I did the hairdressing until I got married, and I -

JR: Now back to your childhood, when you all were really, really young, and you did something that your parents disapproved of, right, what would they do? Would they punish you, would they bring out the old belt, or would they, how would they, would they punish you?

IC: Well, my father would talk to us. My mother would punish us, I can remember getting a spanking from her, but my father never touched me.

LP: Well, you were his pet.

IC: Huh?

LP: You were his pet.

JR: Now why do you say that?

LP: I don't remember having any, I think he talked to us and that was -.

JR: Why do you say that she was his pet?

IC: Because I had the things that they didn't have.

JR: Uh-huh. Did that annoy you at all, did that kind of grate against you at times?

LP: Oh, yeah.

JR: I guess it did, against the whole group.

LP: Especially when I wanted to play the piano, then Ed used to get mad at me when I was playing, I was making too much noise. Then they gave the piano away.

JR: Why did they give the piano away?

LP: I guess they - nobody was using it. Irene wasn't living there at that time. He gave it to

somebody that had a camp, the Gagnons.

IC: He gave it to Dot, didn't he? Dot Gagnon?

LP: Yeah, I guess so.

JR: So usually you weren't, like when it came down to doing something bad or whatever, you weren't like punished or just, never sent off to your room or, all right, at a meal let's say, were you ever like, you know, do something just wrong and he says, "All right, go upstairs and just stay there until you either calm down or?"

IC: I really can't remember. I guess when my father spoke,

LP: We had to -

IC: We had to listen to him, you know, and we couldn't do -

LP: There was no sassing.

IC: No sassing or anything like that.

JR: How about your mother, did, with her, when she spoke did you jump, too?

LP: Oh, yes, I think so.

IC: I guess we did.

JR: You did speak back to your mother or, or you didn't?

IC: No, no, I didn't, we never spoke back to her.

JR: When you all celebrated your birthdays, did you, how was that done, how was that?

IC: Well, my mother would make a cake and we'd have a few gifts but nothing spectacular.

JR: Did you invite friends over, or was it just a family thing?

IC: No. Just the family.

JR: Did you ever go to other birthday parties, or did other people in your town that were your age have birthday parties? Was that, or is that a more modern thing?

IC: They had birthday parties at that time, but.

LP: I had a birthday party, it was a surprise party. At the time I must have been, oh, I think I was in the sixth or seventh grade.

IC: You did?

LP: Yeah, there was different ones that came. I don't know how many, I don't remember how many, but I know I had it.

JR: How did that feel, what was that like for a surprise, this was your first surprise birthday party?

LP: Probably it was the only one, so, but, no, it was something that you enjoyed because you didn't have it all the time, you know.

JR: You don't by any chance remember any special birthday, one that was especially happy or espec-, you got a certain gift or something like that, even when you were in high school, your sweet sixteen?

IC: I can't remember. I don't think we ever had, made a big thing of our birthdays. I can't remember.

JR: On Christmas and Easter, what -

IC: Oh, Christmas was a beautiful day.

JR: Okay, explain how Christmas, start with Christmas, what would your family do? All right, you're young and all, I guess there's always the hoopla about getting gifts, but how did that start from the four A.M. when you woke up, waiting to go down and see what the gifts are or whatever, what was that like?

IC: My parents never put up the tree until after we went to bed the night before Christmas. So we'd get up and that's the first thing we'd see was that Christmas tree and we'd get so excited over it.

LP: Because we knew Santa Claus had come and decorated that tree. But Ed, for years after he was married and had his own, or he came home from college, that was it, and I said, do you want to decorate the tree tonight, that was probably two or three nights before Christmas. He said, "No," he said, "if you wait until Christmas Eve I'll help you, because that's (*unintelligible phrase*)."

But now, he decorates his about two weeks ahead, I guess. That was one thing that, and then they, my mother would go up in the attic and bring all these decorations down, and we had those clips that had candles in them, candles about like that, weren't they?

IC: Not quite as high.

LP: And they were, you know, going around like spiral like. She'd put those candles in that tree and at night my father would light all those candles. Can you imagine, lighting them? And, but we had to sit quiet and he, I guess he'd sing, he'd sing Polish Christmas songs to us. And one of us would sit on one knee and another one on another knee, and one on the arm of the chair and

another one on the other arm of the chair, and -

JR: Oh wow, that's wonderful. Did you have a fireplace?

LP: No.

IC: We got very little for Christmas. We'd get, I don't know what the boys got, but I know she used to dress our dolls. We'd get the same doll every year; she'd just dress it in different clothes. And, you'd get a book to read, and we'd get a game, and I can't remember what else. And we'd stay in all day and play our games.

LP: Kids nowadays, they (*unintelligible phrase*).

JR: Yeah, now it's really materialistic, I think. When you think about, yeah.

IC: Christmas was just a beautiful, beautiful day for us.

LP: And then we'd have a five pound box of chocolates. I don't know if we got those from relatives, and we'd play beano, at night, Christmas night, we'd play beano and whoever won got a chocolate.

JR: Oh really? That's great. What was your meal, when was your, you said you had your big meal around, it was lunch, right? On, well, Christmas or Sundays. But what was it, what did you, did you get turkey or something like that?

LP: Yeah, we had turkey. We always had enough to eat. We might not have other things, but we always had enough to eat. Had meat and potatoes and vegetables.

IC: My mother was a good cook; she made delicious pies and puddings.

JR: What about Easter, was Easter the same?

LP: That was another beautiful day.

JR: You went, did you go to church?

IC: We all got new clothes and went to church.

JR: Did you go to church on Christmas Day, too, or. . . ?

LP: Yes.

JR: When would you go, morning, afternoon?

IC: In the morning, usually the eight o'clock Mass.

LP: And we had a little pocketbook, we'd take that to church. Anything new that we can wear to church, we would.

JR: Did you ever go with your parents anywhere to see relatives or, like on a Christmas or a vacation or something? Did you ever -?

IC: Our relatives, we didn't have any relatives here, the relatives were all in Buffalo, New York and lived in Boston, so we never visited them.

JR: So you never visited them. Did they ever come here?

IC: No.

LP: You mean from Buffalo?

JR: Yeah.

LP: We had a grandfather -

IC: You mean for Christmas?

LP: Oh, no, not for -

JR: Oh, for any period.

IC: Yeah, the people from Buffalo used to come, and from Boston, they used to come once in a -

LP: One weekend, one Sunday, the ones from Buffalo were there and they were leaving the next day, and the ones from Boston came. It was twenty one, and we had to put them up for the night because (*unintelligible phrase*). Everyone in the morning, remember? And the neighbors next door, a couple of the kids went over there, and we went up in the attic, we put mattresses on the floor.

IC: Oh, we had a good time.

LP: If anybody came to the house, they were always welcome, and they stayed over if they had to.

JR: Would you feed them, I mean if they came in would you - ?

LP: Oh, yes.

JR: Even if they weren't invited?

LP: Well, yeah, if they come in like that, you know, relatives from away.

IC: We usually knew they were coming.

JR: Yeah. What about people who were friends of your parents, would they pop by? Not invited, necessarily, but would they be received as warmly as -?

IC: Oh yes.

LP: Oh yeah, yeah.

JR: Really? Did they come often?

IC: They'd come with their kids and -

LP: We'd play games, even the old folks used to sit down and play games with us.

JR: Really? What kind of, do you remember what kind of games they would play besides Casino and -?

LP: Well these are -

End of Side A, Tape One

Side B, Tape One

LP: What was it now, oh when you would kneel down in front of somebody and try to make them laugh?

IC: Oh yeah, we'd make a sound like a cat, and you're supposed to stay as sober as you can; you're not supposed to laugh. So you get, kneel down in front of them and make a face, you know, and meow like a cat.

LP: And the old folks used to do it, too.

JR: Really, that's fantastic. Great. It's too bad they don't have (?) a lot of families that do that now.

LP: They don't do that now, you know.

JR: They don't. That's too bad. That's beautiful, I think it's great. So, for vacations during elementary and high school in your younger days, did you ever go anywhere? Or was it Rumford and working in the father's store? Or was it, what did you do for a vacation? Let's not start with summer, because that's, but like for Christmas vacation or, you know, a certain length of time where you had off, what would you do?

IC: Nothing special.

LP: No. We never went anywhere different than we did every day

JR: Did you have any hangouts like, you know, after school. What would you, would you come straight home?

IC: We were always, oh, you mean after school? We used to go right home after school. We weren't allowed to be out anywhere, we had to go right home after school.

JR: Even through high school?

IC: Yeah.

JR: What about, did the boys in the family get it a little easier, being, you know, boys as opposed to girls?

IC: Well, I think they did, I think, I think they did. They were allowed to go out and play with their friends. But we always had to stay in, I mean kids used to come and, come over to the house, remember? We used to sit out on the porch there and play all kinds of games, and they seemed to always gather over to our house so we didn't have to go anywhere else. We'd play hide-and-seek and, what's the other games we used to play? "What did you put in the old man's soup"?

LP: Yeah

JR: How did you play that? What would you do? How would -

IC: I can't remember. I can remember playing that, but I can't remember how we played it. And that game, that game that we played and we formed groups, and there was a leader of the group and you had to hide your group and the other group would blindfold, so we got, we got our group hidden, then we'd have to go out, the leader would have to go back and make a map of where we hid them, you know, and then this other group would have to go and find them. I can't, they had a name for that game and I can't remember what it was.

LP: I don't know that. And we didn't have to have money to have a good time.

JR: What about summer vacations, what would you do for those?

LP: Well, my father would take us, he had a car. What year was it when we went to Buffalo, the whole family went to Buffalo, and he had bought a Cadillac?

IC: And a new one.

LP: A Cadillac, and it had jumper seats in it. So, of course there was eight of us, and we went to Boston and stayed two or three days with my aunt, and then we went to Buffalo.

IC: We went to Pennsylvania first.

LP: After.

IC: Oh, afterwards.

LP: We went to the Buffalo, and my aunt and my uncle was getting married, so we got there in time for the, no, we missed the ceremony at the church, but we, they had a, the wedding until -

IC: Reception.

LP: - morning, I guess it was. And then we went to Pennsylvania, and those people ran a -

IC: Saloon.

LP: Yeah, a saloon. So that was -

IC: It was never called that.

LP: So that was quite a thing, you know. And then, oh, they used to give us ice cream and candy, and we never had that at home so that was something. And imagine coming in with six kids.

JR: Do you remember what year that was, or how old you were? Like were you teenagers?

LP: I was in high school, 1928? About 1928.

IC: Oh no, it was, it was before that. It was like, I was in the eighth grade, or a freshman, when we went. And I graduated in '29 so that was '26 probably, '25, '26. We stopped at homes that had, put up tourists overnight, and on the way down my father had to pay six dollars for all of us to stay in, stay overnight.

JR: That was a lot of money back then.

IC: They served us crackers and milk before we went to bed. And they gave us breakfast in the morning, and that's all we had to pay was six dollars. And coming back it was seven dollars, I remember that.

JR: So what did you do in Buffalo, what was, you were visiting your grandfather?

IC: Yeah, my grandfather and grandmother, and all my aunts and uncles.

JR: The whole flock of them.

LP: And my grandmother and grandfather couldn't speak a word of English so we never had a chance to talk to them, you know. They tried, and we tried to understand what they were saying.

JR: I take it they were Polish?

LP: Yeah.

JR: Now did they come over from, who was the first ones to, were they the first ones to come over, were they like the first generation in America, or, how was that? Or was it your father that was the first one to come over?

LP: Well, Nana wasn't born in, she was born in Buffalo, so he was –

IC: He was the one that came over from Poland.

JR: Now, how did you spend a Saturday, well, let's start with, stick with a, a Saturday, what would you do on a Saturday?

IC: I worked, I worked.

JR: Doing what?

IC: I had to scrub floors, change beds, and go to the store, and take care of babies.

JR: This is high school, or was this when you were younger?

IC: When I was younger, yeah.

JR: Really? What, why are you giggling?

IC: That's right, (*unintelligible phrase*).

JR: Come on, what? Say it.

LP: I was thinking of her scrubbing floors and me saying no.

IC: I did, I had to scrub the kitchen floor with a brush and a bar of Naptha soap, and I can remember that, every Saturday.

LP: And I used to envy you because you (*unintelligible phrase*).

IC: You used to envy me?

LP: Well, yeah, because you went to camp and played piano.

IC: Yeah, I know, I know, but I had to work for what I got.

JR: How would you spend your Saturdays, what would you do?

LP: Well, I had to work, too. We never went to like ball games or any of that. He couldn't afford to send us. We, well I don't think kids did, that we knew.

IC: I can't remember.

LP: Went to ball games or anything. I did when I went to high school. I remember my father had a tailor shop and it burned, and that was the, that was the Depression, wasn't it? Nineteen thirty-three. And I wanted to go to the ball game that night, for twenty five cents (*unintelligible phrase*), and; but we couldn't afford it because the place had burnt and I don't know if he had, must have had insurance but maybe (*unintelligible phrase*).

JR: So how did it burn down? It just -

IC: I never did, I don't remember what happened.

LP: I don't know if they ever, there was a shoe shop down, a shoe shining place and repair downstairs, and my father was upstairs. Irene and I had gone to church and we got to the top of the, hill, and we looked down and I said, "Gee, look, there's a fire down there. And why don't we go down and if it's cold we can always go into the shoe shop and get warmed up." So we went down and that was the place that was burnt. I think it was burned, it was all gone, wasn't it?

JR: What was it like that night in the house, do you remember what, it must have been kind of an eerie feeling, I mean just to – Was the -

LP: I don't remember.

IC: Of course we were too young to realize what it all meant, you know. We were just young kids then.

JR: What church did you all attend, where was it?

IC: St. Athanasios, it was downtown, yeah.

JR: And did both parents attend it, was it -?

LP: Oh yes, yeah, Catholic church.

JR: Did they put a lot of faith in religion? I mean, did they really believe? I mean, not that I'm questioning it, but did they really, was that something for them to really hold on to while they were alive?

IC: They were really religious, yeah.

JR: And they, did you all, did that kind of inspire you and kind of, you know, catch on to you? Did you all feel that, you know, going to church, as young people, did you enjoy that? Or was it

kind of a burden?

IC: I think we went to church because we had to go. Yeah. I don't know about Ed, I think Ed was probably different, I don't know.

LP: But we're still going to church, so, and we don't have to go now.

IC: No.

LP: And you know, my kids, none of them go. I don't say anything.

IC: Elaine goes.

LP: Not like she used to.

IC: She doesn't?

LP: No, it's easy for her to miss a Sunday. And Tom doesn't -

IC: I have a son who stopped going when he was alone, but then he got married and now he's become very much involved in the church. Sings in the choir and - But I have two daughters who don't go to church. They go when I'm around, but when I'm not around they don't go.

JR: So did you, did your parents get involved in any particular phase of the church, like the altar, you know, or anything like that?

LP: No.

JR: And did you all ever do, I guess it's altar, like acolytes in the Christian sense where they, you know, take the candles and stuff, did you all ever become, or the choir for that matter, did you all ever do any of that?

LP: No.

JR: No? It was kind of a pulled along by the teeth kind of project. All right. Was your father ever interested in politics? I mean, was he politically like gung ho for the Republicans or gung ho for, what?

IC: Yeah, for Democrats.

JR: Was he?

IC: Yeah. He was always interested in politics. Even before Ed got involved in it, he was always involved in it. Not involved in it but he was -

JR: Interested in it.

IC: Interested in it, yeah.

LP: He used to get a Polish paper, once a week it came, Friday. Friday night, there was no talking to him or anything, he, I think he read that paper from top to bottom.

JR: So, as a Polish, I guess, immigrant, he was very proud of that heritage, I guess, you know, very -

LP: Yeah, you know how proud he was? They went to (*unintelligible phrase*), my sister and her husband, and they took my mother and father. They wanted to go see the Niagra Falls on the Canadian side. So, when they were going over they told him, now when they ask you where you were born, say in Buffalo. Because what difference does it make, you know? So they said, "Where were you born?" "Where was I born? I was born in Poland." Well, they let him in, you can go into Canada easy but coming out it's a little harder. So my brother-in-law said, "Now remember, you say you were born in Buffalo because if you have to stay over here, we're not going to, we're going to go home." So, "Where was I born? I was born in Poland." So that's how proud he was of -

JR: Really? Oh that's great.

IC: He used to talk about it all the time, all the time. Yeah.

LP: I wish now sometimes I had listened. Because, you know, we would have learned a lot.

IC: Yeah, I know. Jean was saying the other day, my oldest daughter, she said, I wish I had written down everything that, she used to call him Papa, Papa told me about his bringing, you know, his childhood and so forth. She said, I'd give anything to have that now. None of us ever did.

LP: No, we never.

JR: Was there a large Polish group in Rumford?

IC: No, there was only five or six families.

JR: Very interesting. Did your father ever go out and campaign for a certain president or anything like that?

LP: Oh he didn't campaign for anything.

JR: He didn't?

LP: No.

JR: All right, when your father, when Ed started to get involved in politics, did that kind of

pull your, I'm just curious, did that pull your family more into the, you know, political ring, you know, go, go, go kind of Democrat and all that? I mean were you all, was your family more kind of laid back when it came to politics?

LP: Yes.

JR: And once he became involved?

IC: We didn't get involved.

JR: You didn't?

IC: No.

LP: Oh, I did for a while. I, down in Peru there I joined the Democrats down there and worked with them.

IC: Didn't do any campaigning or anything?

LP: No.

JR: Did your father attend any, you know, clubs or pubs around here? I mean, did he drink, or was he against that, or. . . ?

IC: Oh he, he used to make home brew and wine. He only had it when he had company, you know. He wasn't what you'd call a drinker at all. He belonged to the Elks-

LP: He used to go down there. In fact that night that he, the last night he went to the Elks Club and he was playing cards down there. And then he took the bus home, and my sister found him outside the back door, and -

(Break in taping.)

JR: The bit about the clubs and the pubs, was the Elks Club the only one that, only one he belonged to?

IC: The only one he belonged to? There was another one he belonged to. He belonged to the Knights of Columbus for a while. But one of the priests that was here, he -

LP: Didn't like him?

IC: He got so he disliked him for some reason and he left the. . .

LP: Because that's a Catholic thing, the Knights of Columbus is a Catholic thing.

IC: Yeah, it's a Catholic organization.

JR: So that he finally left after a while?

IC: So he finally left, then the Elks was the only one he'd gone to.

JR: Did he ever go, would he ever go anywhere with a couple buddies, you know, or some friends, and just go out and have a drink? Or would they just stay at, would he stay at home and have people over? Would he ever go out to a pub with somebody, you know, "I'll meet you at the bar," or something like that?

IC: The Elks is the only place he went, you know, they'd go in there and have a drink or play cards. But he didn't do that very often.

LP: No.

IC: Once in a while on a Saturday night after work, after work he'd stop in there. But he wasn't the kind that went out on his own, except to go fishing and hunting, and berrying, he loved to go berrying.

And he used to have Wednesday afternoon off, and of course he had weekends off, and on Wednesday afternoons he'd ask us where we'd like to go and we'd tell him to go, we'd like to go to the pond swimming. He'd say, "Well all right, you have to go blue-berrying first, and then we'll go to the pond." So he'd make us go blue berrying first, and then we'd go to the pond.

LP: We pick them in a hurry to.

IC: And on Sundays he'd ask us where we wanted to go; well, there was some farmers that lived outside of town here that we used to love to go and visit, so he'd say, "where do you want to go today?" "Up on the farm." We had a great time up on that farm. We still talk about it today, it was so much fun.

JR: Really? Where was that, it was just over the hill, or. . . ?

IC: Up over the hill, it was about eight miles probably, something like that, out of town.

JR: Who were the people there? Do you -

IC: Galuza, G-a-l-u-z-a.

LP: And they had a big family.

IC: They had a big family.

LP: And we all, and they were all about our age, so we'd jump in the hay, and then -

IC: We'd pick apples.

LP: Yeah, and when it was corn time they'd cook big kettles of corn and we'd just eat that, you know.

IC: And they always had homemade ice cream, and they had dried fish, and -

LP: All we did was eat up there, you know, and we'd run all around.

IC: They had a big, they had a lot of land, so we did a lot of running around, playing. We just enjoyed going there, but my mother used to get furious with us because she didn't want to go up there. You know, she didn't mind once in a while, but not every weekend.

JR: Yeah. She liked staying at home pretty much, keeping the family -

LP: She did, she never wanted to go to the pond either. She hated that.

IC: Now, my father would hire a camp, he hired a camp quite a few times, for us in the summer. I forgot to tell you that before. And we'd always go for two weeks, he liked that.

LP: He liked to swim. He liked to swim, he'd swim under water, I always remember that.

IC: Of course my mother had to do all the work, you know, getting our clothes all ready and get the food all ready and. . . . And he never helped her any when it came to doing that.

JR: So she didn't really -?

IC: So she didn't really enjoy going, you know. She was all tired before she, all tired out before she got there. And then she had to work all the time she was there just the same as she did at home, so it wasn't any fun for her, I can see that now.

JR: Now you said you, I may have gotten this wrong, you hired a camp? What, where, what is that? I don't understand that, what is that?

IC: Rented a camp.

LP: A cottage.

IC: A cottage, yeah.

LP: We call them camps around here, a cottage maybe is more high class.

IC: It was a pond (?), Roxbury Pond.

JR: Which are very nearby, I take it? They're near here?

IC: Yeah, it's not too far from here.

LP: About (*unintelligible phrase*) miles.

JR: You'd rent it for a weekend, or -?

IC: Two weeks.

JR: Oh, two weeks, and you'd, go during the summer, I take it. Just go out there. That's great.

LP: Yeah.

JR: Did your mother belong to any, did I ask this, did your mother attend any clubs?

IC: No.

LP: There was a bunch, some of the neighbor women got together and they'd go to, they'd have a sewing, they'd have a sewing club -

IC: Someone who was married.

LP: And then every week somebody would have it, you know. Then they'd have a, well, they'd almost have a meal. And, but that was the only thing that she did. It was probably six women.

JR: And they just got together?

LP: And that was all, she never belonged to anything that involved -

JR: All right, was your father really interested in sports and stuff? Was he a, you know, a football, I don't know, football or the races or anything like that?

IC: I don't think so.

JR: No?

IC: At least he never went to any that I know of, any games, no.

JR: Would he ever play with your two brothers outside? You know, like sports or soccer or anything like that? Would he ever go outside and play with them something, you know, more physical kind of sports?

IC: No.

JR: No? As children, who did you all play with? Did you like have your own little group of yourselves and then your other friends, or did each one of you go your own separate ways when you all went off to play at school or something like that? Did you ever have a, you know, a, well

who did you play with, who was it?

IC: Well, there was children that lived right around where we lived, and usually we played all together as far as I can remember, you know, when we were just very young children. Then of course after we got into high school, well, we had our own friends that we went, went with.

JR: So did you ever have like similar friends, like, or did you meet somebody through your sister or your brother that you kind of became very close to? Or was it more kind of isolated? I mean, there's Irene's friend, there's Lucy's friends, and Frances' friends, and -

LP: No, I think when we were at home we all got together. Don't you think? We used to play all these games together with everybody.

IC: Yeah, yeah, everybody'd get involved, yeah.

LP: But I suppose when you're - young -

IC: When we were going to grammar school that's the way it was, we usually were together all the time and had the same friends.

JR: Did you ever have anyone to sleep over? You know, nowadays they have, you know, the big thing is to go sleep over. Did anyone ever, did children ever sleep over?

IC: No.

JR: No? I mean, was that in, I mean could that be done, would that be accepted then?

IC: Oh, I suppose, I suppose it would have been, yeah.

LP: I can't remember anybody doing it.

JR: Could you play with anybody? I mean, could you go out and play with any children on the block? And I'm trying to expose the, you know, was there any, you know, mom or dad saying, "Do not play with the," you know, the -?

LP: Well, there was one family (*unintelligible phrase*), the Hansons, Nana got mad at them for something.

IC: She never stopped us from playing with them.

LP: Oh, no?

IC: No, no. Oh, I can't remember of anybody that she, they ever told us we couldn't play with.

JR: What hobbies did you all have? I mean, what, was there any specific little, you know, stamp collecting or anything, just the most, you know, even the bizarre things. Was there any

things you'd collect, or certain things you'd do?

LP: All I can remember is, my mother used to have a cabinet in the kitchen that had sections in it, drawers and cupboard type things. And we each had one, and that was for our own things, for our own belongings. And, that's where we kept all our things, in that cabinet, until we got the kitchen set.

IC: Yeah, but we were grown up then.

LP: The cabinet went downstairs. I think she -

IC: You didn't get the kitchen set until after I was married, because it was my kitchen set.

LP: Yeah, (*unintelligible phrase*).

IC: I had got a new, I had won a kitchen set, and so we gave them, I got the worst of the deal. I gave them my good set, and I wouldn't part with the one I had won because we had won it for twenty-five cents, and so I didn't want to get rid of that, so I gave my them my good set.

JR: How did you win it for twenty-five cents?

IC: Somebody was selling chances on it, and my husband took a chance, paid a quarter, and he got -

JR: You can't argue with that, can you? Did you all have pets?

IC: No.

LP: We had a cat when we were young, but the cat used to have kittens about every time we turned around. They go over and put them in a bag and put them in the river.

JR: Really, they'd kill them?

LP: Yeah, because they didn't want all those cats.

JR: That's kind of brutal, isn't it?

LP: Remember (*unintelligible phrase*) was the cat?

IC: You shouldn't have said that.

LP: Why?

IC: They call that cat abuse.

LP: Well, years ago, this is what happened years ago.

JR: Yeah well, don't worry, I won't have charges being brought up on you guys, I promise you.

LP: You keep that out.

JR: This is for the sake of history, now, not for the sake of persecution. I wouldn't do that.

Well, you said, oh, there's one thing I wanted to ask you about. When you said that you had those sectioned off drawers and, that were for your own personal things, you know, what, for each one of you, what would you have in yours, do you, what kind of things would you, or what things would you have put in there? What would -

IC: I don't remember. Pencils and papers and books.

JR: School stuff?

IC: No, not necessarily school things. Things that we played with around the house. I can't remember for sure.

JR: What about you, do you remember what you had in your drawer at all?

LP: No, I don't. I'm carrying this thing along because my grandson now, he comes to see us, and I have a drawer in my cabinet for him.

JR: Oh, really?

LP: And when he comes, Nana, you got a surprise for me? I'll put one thing in it, every time he comes, I know he's coming. It might be a little car, it might be some crayons. Like the other day I found a tin can that Band-Aids, you know, Band-Aids, you get them in a tin can, so I was going to throw it out and I said, "Yeah, I think that'll fit, fit his crayons," so I went and his crayons went right in that box. This time he comes, I'll have his crayons in the, anything goes in there, that's the first place he goes and he'll spend a long, a lot of time in that drawer.

IC: I suppose that we were the same way.

LP: Yeah, whatever it was.

IC: Yeah, whatever it was, we can't remember.

JR: I used to have one of those, too, with my grandmother, and I loved them, I loved that, that was great. You said you had spending money. Or, when you'd ask him, or did you get spending money, like here's a dollar a week, or, no allowance?

IC: No, no.

JR: None at all?

LP: Sometimes we'd get a penny when we were going to school, I can remember that. Get a penny so we could go and get some candy. And we'd stand there for five or ten minutes spending that penny. And we did get that.

IC: Yeah, and we got, we got ice cream once in a while. The cart, ice cream cart used to come around, so we used to get ice cream once in a while.

LP: Or sometimes they used to go out for a walk on Sunday nights, they'd go out for a walk, and then they'd come home and have an ice cream bar for each of us. Remember that?

IC: No, I don't.

LP: Oh, yeah.

IC: I can remember going for a ride.

LP: My father liked to go walking, and if he could talk my mother into it on Sunday nights usually they'd go for a walk. They wouldn't stay too long, but they got out, you know. You don't remember that?

JR: So what kind of candy, if you had that penny, what was your, what would be, what would you guys get? I mean, were there certain -?

IC: Jawbreaker.

JR: Jawbreaker?

LP: You know those papers that had the little tiny candies? They had those at that time, and then they had, it looked like a watermelon, half of a slice of watermelon. There's some store now that has all that penny candy.

JR: Again, to turn to your parents, did your parents have many friends? I mean, popularity-wise, I mean did they have like, did they know everyone in the town, or did they just have their certain group of friends?

IC: Well, of course my father knew a lot of people where he was in business. But, they had some friends, some of the Polish people were friends, and then the people that lived next door to us.

JR: Were these -?

IC: They weren't real close. Well yes, I'd call them close friends. We lived next door to that one family for how many years, I forget how many years, I know Gladys had said how many years we lived beside of them, never had a cross word, and -

LP: Of course they never had any kids, so usually it's kids who will cause the trouble, right?

IC: They were never ugly with us either.

LP: No, no.

JR: Who was Gladys?

IC: She was a next-door neighbor.

JR: Do you remember her last name?

IC: Barker (?).

LP: She's eighty -

IC: She's in a nursing home now.

LP: How old is she, eighty-five? She was born in 1900.

JR: Where is she, where is the nursing home? Is it around here?

IC: Yeah, in South Paris. Norway, in Norway, yeah, Norway Nursing Home.

JR: I don't want to ask repeat questions here. All right, a lot of times people in society have groups, there's you know class distinctions and stuff like that. And did you find that in Rumford there was, there were a lot of different groups, or was there just one group of, I mean was there - ?

LP: You mean on the whole?

JR: Yeah, was there different classes?

LP: (*Unintelligible phrase*).

JR: Yeah, like upper class, middle class, lower class, like we have now, was there that in Rumford, did you find?

LP: You mean at that time?

JR: Yeah, yeah.

LP: Well, I don't know, they -

IC: I guess there was. I think there were.

JR: What group did you all, or actually before that, what were they? I mean were they, was it more kind of labor, or money, or, you know, where you lived?

IC: Of course, people that were the big bosses in the mill, they were the, you know, the higher-ups. I suppose you'd say we were in the middle class. We weren't the real poor, poor, but we were in the middle class.

LP: Like I always said, it depends on what you -

JR: Did you, with, okay, the people that were, should I say, poorer than you, or less fortunate than yourselves, were you brought up to think of them as being poorer, or did you, or were they just people you, they were just, or were they people you lived with, I mean did it really matter? Did you look at them and say, oh, that person's poorer than me?

LP: No, we never, that was one thing, my father would never let us make fun of anybody's religion or nationality or if he heard us saying.

IC: He'd get so mad.

JR: Really?

IC: Yeah.

LP: That was one thing they were really strict about.

JR: Racially, too, was he -?

IC: Yeah.

LP: Yeah.

JR: I mean, he didn't call Negroes nigger or anything like that?

LP: No. I know that my brother, Ed used to make fun of my middle name and my father overheard him one day. He says, "That was my mother's name, I don't want to hear you making fun of it again."

JR: And what did Ed do?

LP: (*Unintelligible phrase*).

JR: Oops.

LP: Because my middle name is Teklon (*sounds like*), and that was my father's name. Oh he'd get so mad, because -

JR: Who was considered, you said that the mill people, the owners, were the important people. Did you, did you ever come in contact with them, or were they too up there in the clouds, you know? Or did they -?

IC: No, well, we just didn't associate with them, that's all, it's just that -

LP: Well I know one time they gave, the mill people had an open house for Ed, remember?

IC: Oh yeah, well that was when he was -

LP: And we were invited, and they -

IC: That wasn't when we were little, when we were growing up.

LP: No, but I mean that's, during that time, and they were friendly.

IC: Oh yeah.

JR: But they didn't like scoff at the mill workers or anything like that. They were just, they just lived a different way. What money arrangements did your parents have? I mean, did you father give your mother an allowance for groceries, or how was that done, do you know?

LP: Whenever she was going shopping or going downtown, we all say downtown because we lived up there then, and she had to ask him for money. That hurt her more than anything to have to ask. I don't know why. He'd give it to her. I don't know if (*unintelligible phrase*).

IC: But we did.

LP: But, she had to ask for the money.

JR: You all went to the same elementary school? Did you -

IC: No, I went to Pettingill, Chisholm, and Virginia. I went to three different elementary schools.

JR: Why so many different ones?

LP: Because they moved.

IC: Because we moved.

JR: Because you moved, all right. Okay. And did you join her at the different, I mean did you like follow suit in following, I mean in like when you were going into high school and stuff, did you follow in her tracks in going to a different school? You know, like she'd go to, did you go to Stephen's High School?

IC: Yes.

JR: And did you follow in her tracks and - ?

LP: Yeah, that was the only high school, so -

JR: How was that?

IC: The only school she went to is Virginia School, huh?

LP: Yeah, in the elementary.

IC: Yeah, Virginia School. By the time she was ready to go to school we were all settled and she went to -

JR: What is, now the Virginia, Chisholm and what was the other one?

IC: Pettingill.

JR: Pettingill. What were those schools like, was it just one through four, or five through eight, or how was that? Or one through twelfth grade, or how was that set up?

IC: One through seventh.

JR: And you both went to Virginia, the Virginia School.

IC: Yes.

JR: Did any, did Frances or Eugene or Ed or anyone else go to the other one, go to that, to Virginia, or not?

LP: Yeah, they all went to Virginia, we all went to Virginia.

JR: What was that school like, was it a good school, was it a bad school? Do you have fond memories of it?

LP: No, I don't have any real memories of it. For me it was just a school (*unintelligible phrase*). You see them here and there, these wooden school buildings. But I think, like you said, it was seventh grade.

IC: Yeah.

JR: Did you, and, okay, you said it was kind of like a wooden, but do you remember the building at all that you were all in, do you remember what it was physically like?

IC: Well, all schools used to be built just about the same way -

LP: About the same way, and the hallways.

IC: The Chisholm School is still standing. The Virginia School's gone, and the Pettingill School's gone.

JR: The Chisholm is still there?

IC: The Chisholm School is still there, but they're not using it as a school, they're using it for something else.

JR: When you entered into high school, did you, I take it there was kind of a Muskie legend there, you guys kept going there, there was like, did you find that actually happening, where, you know, "Oh, here's another, here's another one. Did you find that?"

LP: Well, I was gone by the time he went. I was, I had graduated.

JR: Well, you started, you, okay, I mean like you started the, not even in the steps of Ed, but like yourself, you started you know going to Stephen's High School, am I correct?

LP: Yeah.

JR: And then someone followed in your footsteps going to Stephens, and someone, then maybe Ed, and then maybe yourself or whatever. Did you find that you got kind of labeled or kind of put into a cast of being, my brother went to the same high school as I did and everyone, "Oh, there's another Ross." Did you find that at all?

IC: I don't know.

LP: I didn't, because I was gone before they all went.

JR: Did you find that?

IC: No.

JR: No? All right. How big was the school? Stephen's High School, how big was that?

IC: Well it's not, not extra big, although it was, they had the eighth grade at the high school, eighth grade right through to the senior class.

JR: So, did it change at all when you showed up, was it any bigger or smaller or, how many people were in the class?

LP: I think they put that addition on, when was it, after you were gone, huh?

IC: No, before.

LP: Before? I think, I think Ed was the first one that went into that.

JR: All right, if the teacher did something, did you, if the teacher did something that you all, you know, you probably shouldn't have done or the teacher disapproved of, what would, what usually happened to you? Were you sent to the principal, or what was the system of, I mean what would they do? Or did you ever do anything bad, maybe I should ask that?

LP: Not bad enough for that. Oh, I did get a slap across the face one day for something somebody else did.

JR: Didn't that upset you, taking the punishment for someone else?

LP: Well, I had a headache.

JR: I guess so, boy.

IC: Something happened to me in study hall. Somebody else was raising Cain up near where I was sitting, and the teacher pointed to me to go down front and I had to go down front, and it wasn't me that was fooling around.

JR: And did you say anything? Did you say -

IC: No, no, I was too shy.

JR: No you just - Really, you just kind of took it? Gee-whiz

IC: Yeah. First day at, in the eighth grade, though, I got hit over the head with a ruler. Kids were all turning around in that classroom and the teacher said something to them about kids that face the front of the room, and when she said that I turned around, and I hadn't turned around before that. She was standing right in front of me and she hit me over the head with a ruler. That's the only time I ever got punished.

JR: Yeah. So is that, what, usually a slap or something like that?

IC: Yeah.

JR: More physical, I guess, than it is done today.

IC: Well, I guess a lot of them got sent to the principal's office.

JR: What sort of homes did the other people come from, the other children come from? What were they from the mill, were they from, what kind of families were they from?

LP: You mean that we -?

JR: Yeah, I mean the high school.

LP: Oh, I don't know, I think they were about like us.

JR: All right. During -

LP: I don't think people then thought so much of, you know, of being better than we were.

IC: No, I don't think so either.

JR: So it was pretty much, you all just kind of, it didn't really matter.

LP: No, it didn't matter.

JR: Or you didn't even know. It wasn't even a question that was brought up, I guess, you just kind of went to the school and you learned with them.

IC: Yeah.

JR: In your free time during, you know, classes, between a class or something like that, or after school, what would you do? Where would you be found if a teacher was looking for you on some certain day, you know, he needed to find you, all right, on a Tuesday, where would you be during free time, what would you do?

LP: We didn't have any free time then, you went to classes.

JR: And that's it? You didn't, all right, well then -

LP: Nowadays they get out the middle of the morning or the first of the afternoon, but we never did. We were in a certain class and we stayed there.

IC: When we weren't there, we went home.

JR: And then you went home. So you never hung around the school or did anything like that? No after school sports or anything like that?

IC: No.

End of Side B, Tape One

Side A, Tape Two

LP: . . . Now-a-days they get out the middle of the morning or the first of the afternoon, but we never did. We were in a certain class and we stayed there.

IC: When we weren't there, we went home.

JR: And then you went home. So you never hung around the school or anything like that, no after school sports or anything like that?

LP: No.

JR: How would you, turning to Rumford now, how would you describe Rumford, all right before the Depression had started, when you were going, well, that's kind of tough to say, well maybe for you. How was Rumford before the Depression, while you were in high school? What was it like. Actually, you can answer this, too, but what was it, was it a booming metropolis, was it a, what was it like?

IC: Oh, it was a lot busier than it is now. The stores, you know, there was lots of stores. Now a lot of the stores are closed up. And, Friday nights the stores would be open, wasn't it Friday night? And everybody would make tracks downtown, you know, to meet up with friends and go to the stores, and -

LP: That was a big night.

IC: That was a big night in town. But now, Friday night, the stores are open, you never see anybody on the street.

JR: Did you have a dance hall or something like that? You know, the -

IC: They used to have dances up in the municipal building once in a while.

LP: Well, they have the Barn Board, I guess they dance there, too. They're going to have the exotic men there Wednesday.

IC: Wednesday? Wow.

JR: What are the exotic men?

LP: You've never been?

JR: Well, no.

LP: They're going to dance.

JR: Oh gosh.

LP: And I think that they're going to be probably half-dressed, I don't know.

JR: Oh boy, that's great, so I take it -

LP: So you can go there.

JR: Yeah, right. What, this is, this is a relatively pleasant place to live then, I take it.

IC: Oh yes.

JR: It was a good place to grow up.

IC: It's been a nice town to live in, it's been a nice town.

JR: Do you find that, I mean obviously one, I mean coming from D.C. and coming from Lewiston I could not help but noticing the smell as I drove in. Now, did that ever bother you at all, or did you kind of just say, "Well, that's part of the town, that's my town."

IC: I don't think it's as bad, well I know it isn't as bad as it used to be. Used to be a lot, lot worse than what it is now and then it did bother.

LP: But of course a lot of people say, "Well, that's where our money is." If you didn't have the smell, you wouldn't have any town.

JR: Did it affect you all as children, I mean just the town, was the mill considered something, you know, over there, you know, the mill, or let's go down to the mill? Was it a big part of your lives or not?

LP: No.

JR: No, not at all.

IC: No. Not until I went to work, I worked in the mill for eleven years.

JR: Oh, did you really? What did you do?

IC: I was a lab technician.

JR: Oh, wow. Boy oh boy. You never worked in the mill, I take it.

LP: No.

JR: All right. For the other families that you all knew, what would they do for vacation, would they stay in Rumford or would they, were they very much like you and they stayed around and didn't go anywhere or - ?

LP: Yeah, I think so. I think people went on vacations -

IC: Well they, a lot of people went, had a cottage, a lot of people had cottages that they went to in the summer. You know, they bought cottages and owned them.

JR: Were there any prevailing prejudices in the town, was there any like, you know, damn

Southerners, or anything like that?

LP: No.

JR: As a matter of fact, I noticed a Confederate flag on a flag post when I was driving over here, and I could not believe it. There was, it was underneath an American flag, and there was a Confederate flag, on Route 108, I believe it was. I saw it on the left hand side of the road, and I was very surprised. I noted that.

LP: (*Unintelligible phrase*).

JR: Yeah, because I -

LP: It seems I remember seeing it, but I can't remember where it was now.

JR: All right, what, was this, was the mill the one that employed everybody, was that the main field of work?

LP: Yeah, yeah. They used to, what was it they used to employ?

IC: Now it's going down. Around five, between four and five thousand people.

LP: Not now.

IC: Yeah, not now, no. I don't know as they've got two thousand.

LP: If that mill ever went down, the town would go too.

JR: Would it?

LP: Yeah.

JR: What were, more generally, what, you say you kind of enjoyed living here. What were some of the pleasant things about it, now that you've been able to see, you know, well, Florida, and seen more of the world? What was pleasant about Rumford, what do you like about it, personally?

LP: I don't, there's nothing, really that's -

IC: Well, it's been a safe place to live, you know. Most of the people don't, they do now but they didn't used to lock doors, you know? And, not until just, the last few years I guess that they started to lock their doors. And it's a quiet place. We've had, we used to have winter carnivals that were great. Beautiful winter carnivals. Everybody would go on vacation for a whole week for doing that carnival. And, had street carnivals, remember, they had a street carnival at one time. All the stores had things outside, outside their stores, and people dressed up in funny clothes. There's al-, you know, there's always been a lot going on in town and it's been a lot of

fun. But I can't remember to tell you exactly.

JR: How did, after, you know, in the 1930s, how did the Depression affect your family, did it, I mean did it, did you have to cut back on certain things, did you have to give and take, or did it affect you at all?

IC: Well, I'm sure it affected us, but we were too young to realize how much it affected us.

JR: All right. What was the newspaper your father read, what, or you all would read, is there one, or was there one specifically?

IC: No.

JR: How about now, is there, what is the Rumford newspaper, is there a Rumford newspaper?

IC: There is a Rumford newspaper that comes out once a week. Most people take the *Lewiston Sun*.

LP: And on Sunday the *Portland Telegram*.

JR: Okay. Now, for one specific kind of vision sometimes that you have, a memory that's kind of implanted in your head after a time, is there one memory for each of you that you remember your parents, like a certain position or a certain gesture that they'd do, or a certain, you know, something they'd say all the time? Is there anything that you remember that made them your mother and father as opposed to just, you know, something that made them personal that you can remember? It's a tough question, I know. A certain way they laughed or, that's one thing with my mom, a certain way she laughs, and I'll always remember that, I think. Is there anything like that at all?

IC: I can't remember.

JR: No?

LP: Ed probably would remember that more than we do because he was so attached to my mother and father.

JR: Did you often play practical jokes on each other, would you do that? Like - why are you laughing?

LP: I can't, I know, I'm sure we must have. Oh, I can remember I had a little fur piece, I used to stick it in the girls' bed, you know, or leave it right at the bottom so when they'd get into bed they'd feel that fur.

JR: Do you remember that?

LP: Do you remember that? No? And then they paid me back. We had company from Buffalo

and, you've probably seen these jumping beans, so I had some and I put them in my pocket, I'm sitting there and you know, start feeling kind of funny. I wondered if I was having a heart attack or what, you know. And pretty soon I come to, it was those jumping beans. So then I paid them back but I can't remember how. (*Unintelligible phrase*).

JR: Okay. Did you take care of your younger brothers and -?

IC: Yes.

JR: Did you kind of look after them?

IC: I had to.

JR: Did you?

IC: Yeah.

JR: In what way?

IC: Well, we had to stay in our own yard, and I had to look after them, make sure that they did stay in the yard. And, of course when they were infants I used to have to take them out in the carriage. And my younger sister, I used to have to take her with me when I went shopping, came downtown to go shopping. I don't know why, we used to have to stay right in the yard when we were small. We couldn't go off anywhere.

JR: What, I have a question, what was Ed like as a, I know you probably spend more than enough time on this, but what was, I'm sure a lot of people ask you this, too, what was he like as a child, what was he, as a young, a little boy? Was he adventuresome, was he always, you know, was there, you know, like when I was a little kid I got one of those little toy things that went in my crib that you'd, you know, pull on. And then I thought, put that on the thing and, well, I got it, I looked at it and I pulled it off and I ripped it off the thing and threw it on the floor. You know, did Ed have any little nuances that, you know, that, was he quiet, or was he -?

IC: Yeah, he was very, very quiet, very shy, very quiet. He used to hang around my mother a lot in the kitchen, you know, when my mother was cooking, watching her or just sitting and looking out the window at the other kids that were playing outside.

JR: Would he ever join them? I mean, did he ever, would he often go out and play with people?

IC: He would as he got a little bit older, you know, but when he was real young he was very quiet. Always reading, always looking at books and reading, and -

JR: Was that something inspired by his parents or you all, or was that just something he kind of enjoyed?

(Interrupted by visitor.)

IC: Hard ones?

JR: Oh, difficult one, this one is a doozy, you two are going to love this one. I mean, I have to ask this from you two, being sisters. Did you two ever fight, did you ever get into nasty fights?

IC: Oh, yes.

LP: Fight like this?

JR: Well, just anything, snitches, or -

IC: We fought, and we pulled each other's hair and knocked each other down.

JR: Really?

IC: Yeah.

LP: I can't remember that.

IC: Not very often, but we did once in a while for some reason, I don't know why. I don't know what we ever got mad at, but -

JR: Would you say you two got along well?

IC: Yeah, most of the time.

JR: And how about Ed and Eugene, were they -?

IC: Ed was a loner.

JR: Was he?

IC: Yeah, he didn't, Eugene was altogether different than he was, and -

LP: Oh yeah, the little kids would come to the door, can Eugene come out and play? And he'd play, carting the kids around in a, he had a little wagon, remember that? But Ed never, when he got older than they used to, we used to go out and play baseball, and he used to practice track a lot and jumping and that. But, no, I don't, he used to play cards with us.

IC: Yeah, he used to play games with us, when we'd play.

JR: Very quiet, though, essentially.

IC: Yeah.

JR: Would he tag along, or would he just not even, like if you were going out, if you had a friend, some friends, or you were going to go out and play around, would he tag along or would he join? Would he become a member of the group, or would he just kind of shuffle his feet in the background?

IC: Well, sometimes he'd join us. It depended on how he felt, you know. Other times he might want to stay in and read or -

LP: He could read with a room full of people.

JR: Really?

LP: And a lot of times he'd be sitting there, there'd be three or four of us in there talking, wouldn't pay any attention to us.

JR: What kind of books would he read, I mean, what was this desire to read?

IC: Well, when he was little of course he'd look at picture books. I don't know how much he could read when he was -

LP: They said he read every book in the library. Of course they're exaggerating, but you know, he used to go down to the library to get his books.

IC: He used to read histories.

JR: Adventures, any of that?

IC: Yeah.

JR: Adventures, and Sherlock Holmes, that kind of stuff?

IC: Probably.

JR: As he went into high school, what, did you notice any changes or, in his relationship with his parents? I mean, you know how the adolescent years are really stormy, I mean they are for anybody, I mean you can't really avoid it. Did you find that he came out on top, or not even, I'm sure he actually probably did, I mean you can't help but, but what were those years like?

IC: I don't think, I don't think he was that kind of a fellow. I think he was, I don't think he changed any towards my parents.

JR: Didn't get in any little fights or anything like that? Or just, "You don't understand me?"

LP: They'd argue, and I know sometimes I'd go to, that was when I was living at home and Ed had come home from school or whatever, and they'd start arguing and I would think, are they

going to get into a fight or not? You know, it was just, when they got through they still believed the way they did in the beginning, you know, neither one could change the other (*unintelligible word*). I know they used to -

JR: But, he would listen, would he listen to his parents or?

LP: Oh yeah, he, but then he'd give his ideas.

JR: Really, that's interesting. Okay, that's it for questions. Is there anything that I've left out that -?

LP: You haven't got anything there.

JR: Don't be so modest, (*unintelligible phrase*) terrible. Is there anything, I mean, that you know, just memories or is there any certain specific memories that I didn't, you know, bring out? Or is there anything that I could have, you know, is there anything you would like to add that I may not have asked about?

IC: I've been trying to think ever since you called, you know, what I was going to tell you, and I haven't been able to think of anything. I got out that book over there that's got a small article in it, and I got that out, that's a life story.

JR: Oh, all right, I'd like to see that.

IC: You want to see it?

JR: Yeah. All right, well thank you. I want to just end this tape here. Thank you very much, I do appreciate it.

End of Interview